

Telling Your Story

It's your story to tell

We always remember stories and your personal story is important to make the issues we are advocating feel real. Your story helps connect with the politician on a human level and will support their understanding of what it is like to live with motor neurone disease (MND). This guide will help you start in a conversation, a letter or an email to politicians to advocate for people living with MND. It aims to help you find a way to include your story, make it impactful and how to present it to a politician or a decision maker.

Your personal story is a summary of what you are going through, it includes your perspective based on your experiences and how it is affecting your life. It conveys your feelings, and it is emotional.

It is important to demonstrate how the government action/inaction/decision has directly impacted your life and at a minimum it should include:

- Basic personal details
- Facts about your personal situation
- The issues
- Action (your one “ask”)



How or where to start

There are several strategies to assist you in expressing yourself clearly and effectively. This guide will focus on the 5 W's which is structured for telling your story.

Whether it is for writing for a letter, email or preparing yourself for a conversation the 5 W's is a commonly used checklist in journalism, and it helps contain all the essential points in your story. You simply list the questions that will help tell your story and start answering them one by one. The following table outlines questions can be used as a guide.

When, where, and by whom	What	When and where	How	What	How	Why
was your diagnosis made (or the diagnosis of your loved-one)?	challenges have you faced as a result of the disease?	these challenges have they occurred?	have you overcome or managed these challenges?	do the government (or other decision makers) need to do to help you and others?	would you be helped by this action(s)? / would others be helped?	inaction is not an option

Other strategies can help include; freewriting, listing your challenges or use a photograph that represent your personal story and write about it.

Story structure

The next step is to start writing formally, use complete sentences, make sure it reads well, that your story is clear, compelling and focussed. And consider including as many details as you are comfortable for the following:

1. Basic personal details (1 paragraph) – name, age, your electoral, family, current or former work, about your family.
2. Facts about your personal situation (1-2 paragraphs) – your diagnosis, circumstances, timing, how you felt and continue to feel.
3. Clearly defined issue (2 – 3 paragraphs) – what are the issues (lack of data to help research, no cure, delayed diagnosis, polices, funding differences between the NDIS and aged care system) and why the issues is important.
4. Action (1 paragraph) – what you need to be done and what the government can do to help you and your family.

It is very important that your story is focused around a 1-2 page letter or email, and if you are telling it in person, it is usually five minutes.

We've provided a letter/email template [here](#), talking points for the election platform [here](#) and information about MND Australia election priorities [here](#).

Tips for delivering your story in person

- Read your story out loud, the best way to prepare is to read your story out loud, alone or to a friend or family member.
- Time yourself, 5 minutes is enough to deliver a coherent and focused story, don't rush through your story to keep a time limit.
- You don't need to memorise your story, you can read your story during a meeting
- Stay focused on telling your story.